

BACKGROUND: *This instruction sheet provides rules and stylistic guidelines for creating MARC field 520 summary notes for bibliographic records receiving CYAC treatment.*

Summarization of content is an LC core element for children's fiction (LC-PCC policy statement for RDA 7.10).

Children's fiction, or fiction intended for children and young people through high school age (H 1690), receiving CYAC treatment must include a brief, non-critical, one-sentence annotation, or summary, that describes the content of the work. Occasionally the addition of a second sentence is warranted.

The summary note is entered in MARC field 520, with first and second indicators set to blank.

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520 ## $a   Rescued from the outrageous neglect of his aunt and uncle,  
             a young boy with a great destiny proves his worth while  
             attending Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry.
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Publishers sometimes provide summaries for their works, but these typically do not adhere to CYAC's requirement for nonjudgmental annotations. However, if a summary from the publisher or another source is used, enclose it in quotation marks and give the attribution in subfield \$c as follows (DCM D8.11.2.29):

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520 ## $a   "Fifteen-year-old Jennifer Strange runs an agency for  
             underemployed magicians in a world where magic is fading  
             away, but when visions of the death of the world's last  
             dragon begin, all signs point to Jennifer--and Big Magic"--  
             - $c Provided by publisher.
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Further examples of the different types of CYAC summaries are included at the end of these guidelines.

1. General guidelines. Aim for one sentence of thirty to thirty-five words, but use as many words as necessary to describe the work adequately and accurately. Prefer present tense, active voice, and precise language. Avoid judgmental, critical, or editorial language or any language that makes assumptions about outcomes for the reader. *Examples:*

"A gripping account..."
"A powerful collection..."
"Teaches children..."
"Children will learn..."

The language of the summary does not need to match the reading level of the work or the intended audience of it. Summaries are meant to help children and those who work with them (parents, caregivers, teachers, librarians, etc.). Mention the name and age of the main character, when

Summaries C 750

1. *General guidelines (continued)*

appropriate, as well as the setting, time period, and key elements of plot or theme. Try not to give away too much of the story--particularly the ending. (No spoilers!) Several situations necessitate adding a second sentence like works with toy and movable features or with nonfictional back matter.

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520 ## $a Follows the progress of a hungry little caterpillar
           as he eats his way through a varied and very large
           quantity of food until, full at last, he forms a
           cocoon around himself and goes to sleep. Die-cut
           pages illustrate what the caterpillar ate on
           successive days.
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Note that some details like language information belong in different MARC 5XX note fields.

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546 ## $a Parallel text in English and Spanish
504 ## $a Includes bibliographic references.
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2. *Stylistic guidelines.* Follow *The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)* for style, usage, and grammar. Some relevant guidelines are as follows:

- 2.14. For an em dash--one that indicates a break in a sentence like this--type two hyphens (leave no space on either side).
- 6.19. When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series of three or more, a comma--known as the serial or series comma or the Oxford comma--should appear before the conjunction.
- 8.140. In nontechnical contexts, the word *earth*, in the sense of our planet, is usually lowercased when preceded by *the* or in such idioms as “down to earth” or “move heaven and earth.” When used as the proper name of our planet, especially in context with other planets, it is capitalized and *the* is usually omitted.
- 8.131. The words *sun* and *moon* are usually lowercased in nontechnical contexts and always lowercased in the plural.

Avoid contractions and slang. Write out numbers through ninety-nine. Use capitalization and spelling found in the work. If the spelling is very unusual, put the word in quotation marks. Always spell out United States. Generally, do not repeat terms or names already present in the title of the work. (Use thesauri.)

3. Writing process. Note that summaries may have different purposes. Some summaries hint, some introduce, some are comprehensive, some capture the essence, and some list events. Favor concise language over wordiness (i.e., instead of “shortcuts and guidelines, including specific details,” use “tips”). For shorter works, read the entire story. For longer works, read at least the first few and last chapters of the work. Make use of information gathered from specialized websites, summaries supplied by the publisher, and other resources. Use the summary as the basis for or guidance in assigning subject headings. When creating a bibliographic record for a new edition, reuse the summary from the previous edition unless there is an error or the older summary can be improved (with updated language, for example).

Examples of summaries.

1. [Age, Ethnicity, and Gender of the Main Character\(s\)](#)
2. [Based on or Variation on](#)
3. [Biographical Fiction](#)
4. [Collections](#)
5. [Ending with a Question](#)
6. [Folklore, Fairy Tales, and Fables](#)
7. [Form, Genre, and Binding](#)
8. [Historical Setting](#)
9. [Multiple Points-of-View, Perspectives, Voices, or Time Lines](#)
10. [Nonfiction](#)
11. [Picture Books](#)
12. [Repetition](#)
13. [Second Sentence](#)

1. Age, ethnicity, and gender of the main character(s). These examples of summaries show different ways of describing notable attributes of a work’s main characters, including their age or grade levels, nationality or ethnicity, and species (for animals, trees, etc.).

520 ## \$a When her father becomes clinically depressed, fifteen-year old Zoe worries that his illness will engulf the entire family.

520 ## \$a Drew and Steph, ages almost-sixteen and fourteen, reluctantly take a Baltic cruise with their heretofore unknown grandmother, a singing star of the 1940s, and have the experience of a lifetime.

520 ## \$a Very definite in her likes and dislikes, seven (nearly eight)-year-old Violet Bing goes to stay with her unusual Great-Aunt Astrid in The Grand House.

Summaries C 750

1. Age, ethnicity, and gender of the main character(s) (Continued)

- 520 ## \$a A Lebanese man who comes to the United States to seek his fortune suffers several setbacks, but makes his dream come true.
- 520 ## \$a During the summer between eighth and ninth grades, Alice and her friends Pamela and Elizabeth decide to improve themselves through exercise.
- 520 ## \$a Under a deadline from his editor, Howie the wire-haired dachshund creates a story featuring a superhero whose ability to stink enables him and his sidekick, a sparrow named Little D, to fight crime in Central City.

2. Based on or variation on. Some summaries describe works that are variations, adaptations, derivations, or retellings of biblical stories, classical literature, folk songs, folklore, fairy tales or other original works. These works sometimes have significantly different settings or characters from the original works, sometimes with the intent of communicating the same themes and other times to expand or upend the original themes.

- 520 ## \$a A fictionalized account of the biblical tale in which a Hebrew infant, rescued by the daughter of the Pharaoh, passes through a turbulent adolescence to eventually become a prophet of his people while his sister finds her true self as a priestess to the Egyptian gods.
- 520 ## \$a In an adventure reminiscent of Homer's *Odyssey*, fifteen-year-old Odilia and her four younger sisters embark on a journey to return a dead man to his family in Mexico, aided by La Llorona, but impeded by a witch, a warlock, chupacabras, and more.
- 520 ## \$a Set on the coast of the Pacific Northwest, this variation on the traditional cumulative rhyme describes the silly consequences of an old woman's fishy diet.
- 520 ## \$a In this contemporary retelling of "*Jane Eyre*," an orphaned nanny becomes entranced with her magnetic and brooding employer, a rock star with a torturous secret from his past.
- 520 ## \$a A Filipino monkey secures the fortune of his rather dimwitted young owner in this variation of a traditional tale.

3. Biographical fiction. Summaries for works of biographical fiction may include a second sentence to indicate that the work includes informational back matter, such as chronologies, lists of facts, or historical notes.

3. Biographical fiction. (Continued)

- 520 ## \$a A fictionalized account of how plant scientist George Washington Carver came to an Alabama school and taught the children how to grow plants and reap the rewards of nature's bounty. Includes factual note about George Washington Carver.
- 520 ## \$a A fictionalized account of how in 1849 a Virginia slave, Henry "Box" Brown, escapes to freedom by shipping himself in a wooden crate from Richmond to Philadelphia.

4. Collections. Anthologies or collections may have a summary referencing the general theme of the collection. Other times, the plots of two or three stories can be distilled into a single sentence in a list.

- 520 ## \$a A collection of stories and poems on various fairy tale, ghost, or supernatural themes.
- 520 ## \$a Twelve authors of young adult fiction collaborate on this collection of paired stories told alternately from the point of view of the boy and the girl.
- 520 ## \$a In three short stories, two fox sisters run away from home, bury a time capsule, and take advantage of some creative juice.

5. Ending with a question. Ending a summary with a question is uncommon, but it is acceptable. Such phrasing may be useful to act as a “hook,” to avoid giving away the ending, or to express the precariousness of a situation in the narrative.

- 520 ## \$a When her friends in the British boy band Abbey Road ask her to be their opening act, will singer-songwriter Lark find the courage to overcome her recurring stage fright in time to perform when it counts the most?
- 520 ## \$a Gerald the elephant has a big decision to make, but will he make it in time?

6. Folklore, fairy tales, and fables. For many folk tales, fairy tales, fables, and pourquoi tales, a single, well-written summary note may be used and reused for most versions of the same story.

- 520 ## \$a A clever cat wins for his master a fortune and the hand of a princess.
- 520 ## \$a A reward of one grain of rice doubles day by day into millions of grains of rice when a selfish raja is outwitted by a clever village girl.

Summaries C 750

6. *Folklore, fairy tales, and fables.* (Continued)

- 520 ## \$a When Tortoise tries to win a bride through trickery, his wise friend, Snail, must find a cunning way to stop him.
- 520 ## \$a In her haste to flee the palace before the fairy godmother's magic loses effect, Cinderella leaves behind a glass slipper.
- 520 ## \$a In this story that explains why spiders never climb trees, trickster Anansi gets in trouble when he tries to steal food from King Plantation Garden

7. *Form, genre, and binding.* Instead of including a second sentence or a separate MARC 5XX note, details about form, genre, or binding can be included in the annotation. For example, the phrase “illustrations and rhyming text” indicates that the work is a picture book in rhyme. Toy and movable aspects and narrative devices (i.e., choose-your-own-adventure) can also be incorporated into a summary.

- 520 ## \$a The reader is placed at the Pipe Masters surfing contest in Oahu, Hawaii, where the story progresses based on the results of a coin-flip at the bottom of each page.
- 520 ## \$a A wordless picture book about a young boy who wonders why his mother's belly is growing larger.
- 520 ## \$a Illustrations and simple, rhyming text follow Little Ewe as she ignores Shepherd while chasing three lizards, splashing with six frogs, and more in a tale inspired by the Parable of the Lost Sheep.
- 520 ## \$a Brief text and pop-up illustrations explore the characters, places, and technologies of the Star Wars movies.

8. *Historical Setting.* Summary statements can highlight the work’s geographic or chronological setting, if it is significant. Historical notes and timelines may be mentioned in a brief second sentence. Historical fiction for children is a genre where the summary occasionally exceeds the prescribed word count.

- 520 ## \$a Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.
- 520 ## \$a In the winter of 1208 while the dispute between the Pope and the Cathars intensifies, thirteen-year-old Lady Elinor, secretly in love with the troubadour Bertran de Miramont and determined to avoid her imminent marriage to an older

8. Historical Setting. (Continued)

man, runs away from her family's castle disguised as an apprentice troubadour, unaware of the dangers ahead as the Albigensian Crusade begins its onslaught on her native Languedoc.

520 ## \$a In 1863, twelve-year-old Will, who longs to be a drummer in the Union army, is stuck in his sleepy hometown of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, but when the Union and Confederate armies meet right there in his town, he and his family are caught up in the fight. Includes historical notes, glossary, and a timeline of events.

520 ## \$a Tam travels back in time to his small English town at the time of World War II, where his friendship helps a traumatized girl living on a farm just outside the town.

9. Multiple points-of-view, perspectives, voices, or time lines. The recommended word count for an annotation is sometimes exceeded when the summary describes a work employing complicated plots, narratives, styles, or structures. In these instances, it can be difficult to explain succinctly alternating timelines or various points-of-view.

520 ## \$a Told in their separate voices, twelve-year-old twins Percy and Penny are excited to spend a summer riding horses on their Uncle Stretch's Minnesota spread, until they discover it is a pig farm.

520 ## \$a Told in two voices, Allie and Jake continue to be bombarded by family issues and pressures from the "Cresties" and their poorer counterparts as they spend a summer dealing with the fallout of their breakup.

520 ## \$a Told from alternating perspectives, Bunny takes a basketball scholarship to an elite private school to help his family, leaving behind Nasir, his best friend, in their tough Philadelphia neighborhood.

520 ## \$a Told in their separate voices, seventeen-year-olds Kate, an Oregon socialite, and Caleb, a Hawaiian who works at her family's hotel, fall deeply in love despite a family feud, and rely on their Christian faith to carry them through.

520 ## \$a Tells, from four points of view, the ramifications of a pregnancy resulting from a "one-time thing" between Ellie, who feels loved when boys touch her, and Josh, an eager virgin with a troubled home life.

520 ## \$a Told from their different points of view, sixteen-year-old Catherine and her adopted Mexican American brother, Henry, agonize over the loss of their uniquely close relationship

Summaries C 750

9. *Multiple points-of-view, perspectives, voices, or time lines. (Continued)*

when their prejudiced older brother and sister-in-law return after a family tragedy, determined to drive Henry away from the family's San Francisco home.

520 ## \$a Alternates between two stories--contemporarily, seventeen-year-old Jacob visits a daunting Amsterdam at the request of his English grandmother--and historically, nineteen-year-old Geertrui relates her experience of British soldiers's attempts to liberate Holland from its German occupation.

520 ## \$a In parallel stories, a Ukrainian Jewish family prepares to immigrate to the United States in the late 1800s, and Frederic Auguste Bartholdi designs, raises funds for, and builds the Statue of Liberty in honor of the United States' centennial.

520 ## \$a In alternate chapters, eighteen-year-old Sir Michael Severson, an anachronistic knight errant, and seventeen-year-old Fisk, his street-wise squire, relate their journey to Huckerston, a port town where dangerous bandits are raiding merchant ships.

520 ## \$a The intertwining stories of a girl traveling to the Rock and Roll Extravaganza and a toad whose home is in danger of being paved over.

520 ## \$a In a parallel narrative set in late nineteenth-century England, teenaged country girl Mary Finn relates the unhappy conclusion to her experiences as a young servant in an aristocratic London household while, years later, young James Nelligan describes how he comes to leave his beloved foster family to live and be educated at London's famous Foundling Hospital.

520 ## \$a The adventures of various nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters are retold in backward sequence with each tale interrelated to the other. Includes Goldilocks, Jack and the beanstalk, Jack and Jill, the frog prince, Cinderella, and the gingerbread man.

10. *Nonfiction.* Even though juvenile nonfiction is generally not in scope for inclusion in the CYAC program, summaries for such works were regularly written by children's literature catalogers at the Library of Congress in the past and may be written by catalogers at individual institutions if they desire.

520 ## \$a An introduction to the civil rights leader.

10. *Nonfiction (Continued)*

- 520 ## \$a Describes the development of the automobile and some of the inventions that have made it a popular mode of transportation.
- 520 ## \$a Presents side-by-side narration of the earth's making of a mountain, shaping it with sun, wind, and rain, and a child's efforts at the beach to make a tall sand mountain which is also affected by the elements.
- 520 ## \$a Uses the story of a teenage boy who is worried about a friend to explore the problem of suicide and what to do for someone who has suicidal thoughts.
- 520 ## \$a Using edited transcripts of testimony, recreates the trial of John Tinker and two other students who were suspended from school for protesting the Vietnam War, and invites the reader to act as judge and jury.

11. *Picture books.* Picture books, like any other form or genre of juvenile literature, need bibliographic records with well written MARC 520 summary notes. However, works with limited or no text can be described using formulaic phrases.

- 520 ## \$a Brief text and illustrations depict the unconditional love that only a puppy can give.
- 520 ## \$a Illustrations and simple text describe the back ends of various animals.
- 520 ## \$a Cut-paper illustrations and single words of text show a kitten's attempts to imitate an adult cat's mastery of such skills as stretching and stalking.

12. *Repetition.* As a literary device, intentionally repeating terms in the summary that are already present in the title of the work can reinforce themes or call attention to important characters or settings. Repetition can also be a weakness, breaking up the cadence of a sentence and pointing to the need for a thesaurus.

- 245 10 \$a Tiny the birthday dog
- 520 ## \$a Eliot prepares a birthday party for his canine friend, a big dog named Tiny.
- 245 10 \$a Martha speaks
- 520 ## \$a Problems arise when Martha, the family dog, learns to speak after eating alphabet soup.

13. *Second sentence.* It is often necessary to add a second sentence to a summary statement for works with accompanying material, toy and movable features, or nonfictional back matter (like recipes, timelines, diy projects, etc.).

Summaries C 750

13. Second sentence. (Continued)

- 520 ## \$a Told in the style of a cumulative folk song, a grandmother makes empanadas, a traditional Hispanic treat, for her family. Includes recipe.
- 520 ## \$a Eight animal friends play baseball in the park. Includes words in Spanish.
- 520 ## \$a A small-town family celebrates the Fourth of July by attending a parade, having a picnic, and watching fireworks. Interspersed throughout the pages are patriotic songs and traditional rhymes.
- 520 ## \$a Characters from nursery rhymes populate this tale, which highlights the colorful aspects of the familiar poems. Includes a key to the nursery rhymes referenced in the story.
- 520 ## \$a In 1874 California, six-year-old tomboy Andi is not used to feeling afraid, but when it is time for her to start school she needs God's help to get over her fear of so many new things all at once. Includes brief historical notes.
- 520 ## \$a The main character's kind words of love and warm hugs bring happiness to the residents of the Sad Land of Higbit. The main character's name and sex are omitted in order for the reader to personalize the story.
- 520 ## \$a Text and illustrations introduce the many kinds of food that can be found at a supermarket. On heavy board pages cut in the shape of a store.